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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 TEL AVIV 001170

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

NEA FOR BURNS/SATTERFIELD/DIBBLE;
NEA/SA/EX FOR RICHIE; DEPT FOR DS/IP/ITA; DEPT FOR
DS/IP/NEA;
NSC FOR ABRAMS/DANIN; USAID FOR DCHA, DCHA/FPP, PRM FOR
DEWEY/GREENE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KWBG PHUM PREL PTER ASEC CASC GZ IS

SUBJECT: WB/G SITREP: FEBRUARY 28, 2005 (1200 HOURS LOCAL)
-- FIVE DEAD AND MORE THAN 50 INJURED IN TEL AVIV SUICIDE
BOMBING

This is a joint ConGen Jerusalem/Embassy Tel Aviv cable.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: A suicide bomber affiliated with Palestinian Islamic Jihad detonated an explosive device outside a Tel Aviv nightclub at 2320 hours February 25, killing four people and injuring another 55 Israeli civilians, five of them severely and eight moderately. A fifth victim died of her injuries overnight February 27-28. The PA released a statement February 26 condemning the bombing, charging that the attack sought to sabotage Palestinian national interests, and promised to pursue the perpetrators. PA President Abbas also met on February 26 with PA security chiefs and ordered immediate action in response to the bombing. On February 26, the IDF imposed a curfew on the West Bank village of Deir al-Ghusun, near Tulkarm, for several hours, arresting five Palestinians, including two brothers of the Tel Aviv suicide bomber. The IDF also arrested the local Imam in the village. PA Interior Minister Nasir Yusif announced on February 26 that PA security forces arrested three Palestinians from Deir al-Ghusun suspected of being associates of the bomber. End Summary.

West Bank

¶2. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths: In Qalqilya, a Hamas activist died on February 26 from injuries received during clashes with the IDF earlier this month.

-- Attack/Injury: An Israeli Border Policeman shot and wounded a Palestinian woman on February 26 outside the Ibrahim Mosque/Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron after the woman attempted to stab the policeman with a knife.

¶3. (SBU) ARRESTS/SECURITY:

-- Curfew/Arrests: The IDF on February 26 imposed a curfew on the West Bank village of Deir al-Ghusun, near Tulkarm, and arrested five Palestinians, including two brothers of the Tel Aviv suicide bomber. The IDF also arrested the local Imam in the village. The IDF lifted the curfew several hours later (see "Israel").

-- Arrests: Palestinian Authority (PA) Interior Minister Nasir Yusif announced on February 26 that PA security forces arrested three Palestinians from Deir al-Ghusun in connection with the suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. The three arrested men are suspected on being associates of the bomber.

-- Arrests: The IDF arrested nine Palestinians February 27 in the villages of Idhna, near Hebron, and Illar and Attil villages, near Tulkarm. One of the arrested individuals includes an officer from the PA intelligence service, the Mukhabarat.

-- Incursions/Arrests: The IDF entered overnight February 27-28 the Balata refugee camp near Nablus and Ramallah, arresting at least five Palestinians.

-- Arrests: Israeli police announced on February 27 the arrest of eight individuals, five Israelis and three Palestinians, suspected of fraudulently acquiring and selling West Bank land owned by Palestinians.

-- Security Development: The IDF on February 26 imposed as many as 13 flying checkpoints in the northern West Bank in response to the February 25 suicide bombing in Tel Aviv.

-- Security Development: Palestinian gunmen on February 27 fired gunshots at an Israeli vehicle traveling near the village of Zawiya in the northern West Bank. There were no

injuries reported from this incident.

14. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- The PA on February 26 released a statement that condemned the February 25 suicide bombing in Tel Aviv, charging that the attack sought to sabotage Palestinian national interests, and promised to pursue the perpetrators. PA President Abbas also met on February 26 with PA security chiefs and ordered immediate action in response to the bombing.

-- PA security advisor Jibril Rajoub declared that the Palestinian factional talks scheduled to take place in Cairo on March 5 are postponed until March 15 in the wake of the February 25 suicide bombing in Tel Aviv.

-- PA President Abbas departed Ramallah on February 27 for Amman, en route to the United Kingdom to attend the March 1 London Conference.

-- Palestinian media reported that Prime Minister Quraya, appointed PA Minister for Civil Affairs Minister Mohammad Dahlan as the PA's Coordinator on the Gaza Disengagement Plan.

Gaza

15. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths: Palestinian media reported that one Palestinian died February 25 from injuries sustained earlier that day when three Palestinians attempted to cross the Egyptian-Gaza border at Rafah. The other two men were arrested, according to Israeli media reports.

-- Injuries: Nil.

-- Mortars/Rockets: Nil.

-- Shootings: The IDF reported that Palestinian militants launched one shooting attack at an IDF outpost south of Neve Dekalim February 27.

-- Shootings: UNRWA reported that IDF soldiers opened fire with machine guns for five minutes February 26 at a group of Palestinian farmers attempting to approach their bulldozed fields near Kfar Darom. No injuries were reported.

-- Explosions: Nil.

16. (SBU) INCURSIONS/DEMOLITIONS:

-- UNRWA reported that an IDF bulldozer leveled ground northwest of Kfar Darom February 25.

17. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS:

-- Route Four (Salahadeen Road), the main north-south traffic artery, was open February 26-28, with a major detour at Netzarim Junction. Abu Kouli and Netzarim Junction are both open 24 hours per day. Abu Kouli is open only for public transportation; no private vehicles are allowed to cross.

-- Erez Crossing was open for internationals and for a limited number of Palestinians February 25-27, and 530 laborers and 35 merchants crossed into Israel February 25; 47 laborers and 16 merchants crossed February 26; and 978 laborers and 122 merchants crossed February 27.

-- The Erez Industrial Zone was open February 27, and 457 Palestinian laborers entered the zone. The Erez Industrial Zone was closed February 25-26.

-- Sufa Crossing was closed for Palestinian laborers February 27-28, but was open for the import of aggregates used in construction. Sufa was closed February 26.

-- Karni Terminal was partially open February 26-28.

-- Rafah Terminal was open for arrivals and departures February 26-28.

-- Tel al-Sultan checkpoint was closed. Toufah checkpoint was open for residents of al-Mowassi, except for males between the ages of 16-35.

18. (SBU) ISRAEL:

-- A suicide bomber affiliated with Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) detonated an explosive device outside a Tel Aviv nightclub at 2320 hours February 25, killing four people and injuring another 55 Israeli civilians, five of them severely and eight moderately. A fifth victim died of her injuries overnight February 27-28.

-- According to media reports, the GOI decided to refrain from responding militarily to the February 25 suicide attack. The IDF will, however, resume operations, including targeted killings, against PIJ activists, has delayed the expected transfer of five West Bank towns to PA security control, and has postponed indefinitely planned joint meetings to discuss prisoner releases.

Visit Embassy Tel Aviv's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/telaviv>

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KURTZER